
**STATEMENT OF PATRICIA McGINNIS, PRESIDENT AND CEO
THE COUNCIL FOR EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 24, 2006**



Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. Thank you all very much for inviting me to testify today on emergency preparedness on the eve of the 2006 hurricane season. Chairman Davis, I also want to thank you for your leadership of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina. This work and the final report, "A Failure of Initiative," provide invaluable insights and recommendations to improve preparedness and response to major emergencies in the future.

The Council for Excellence in Government ("Council") is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that focuses on improving the performance of government at all levels, building public-private partnerships and engaging the public to improve government results and accountability.

I. The Council's Work On Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

Over the past three years, The Council for Excellence in Government, in partnership with public, private, academic and civic leaders, has worked on issues related to homeland security and emergency preparedness. Our approach has been to bring leaders, experts and the public into strategic discussions to identify gaps, promote innovation and collaboration, and to focus on metrics to ensure accountability not only for capacity and capabilities, but also for performance and results by those responsible for emergency preparedness.

Through town hall meetings across the country and public polling, we looked at homeland security from the citizens' perspective. Through expert working groups and symposia with participants from federal, state and local governments, corporate partners and civic groups, we translated the public agenda into specific recommendations for action, contained in our 2004 report, "*We the People: Homeland Security from the Citizens' Perspective*" (<http://www.excelgov.org/wethepeople>). The Council also partnered with the American Red Cross, George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute and the Department of Homeland Security to bring together experts, public, private and nonprofit leaders in 2005 to identify barriers and strategies for emergency preparedness, contained in "*Public Preparedness: A National Imperative*" (<http://www.excelgov.org/publicpreparedness>).

One of the most critical concerns we heard during the town hall meetings, in national polling and in our working groups, was the lack of clear and consistent benchmarks to assist public, private, and civic leaders and organizations to evaluate their preparedness. How ready are we? To address that issue, the Council is now focused on measuring progress and gaps in emergency preparedness, identifying effective, innovative approaches and actions in the public

and private sectors, and promoting regional coordination in planning, training, exercising and measuring performance. These initiatives include:

CREATION OF A PUBLIC READINESS INDEX: With support from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Council is working collaboratively with leaders in the homeland security enterprise and survey experts to design a Public Readiness Index (“PRI”) to measure and track progress and gaps in public preparedness. The PRI is a survey based tool which, similar to the consumer confidence index, is designed to measure how prepared individuals and families are for major emergencies, ranging from natural disasters to terrorist attacks or public health emergencies, such as avian flu. Specifically, the survey asks individuals and families if they: know how to get information on emergency preparedness; have stocked enough supplies for three days if an emergency strikes (like water, food and medicine); have developed a family communications plan, and whether they are familiar with their state, local, employer and school emergency plans and their experience practicing those emergency plans. Additionally, the survey asks questions about who the public would trust in their community to provide information in an emergency or to order an evacuation.

The PRI is designed to measure public preparedness in metropolitan areas, states, regions or the nation as a whole. The Council has worked with key players in the civic, government and business communities to get their input and to build ownership of the Public Readiness Index. We have reviewed preparedness guides, including the national Ready campaign, as well as state and local campaigns, other preparedness surveys and risk management literature. Survey experts have conducted focus groups and cognitive testing to develop one PRI survey tool. The PRI survey is currently being pilot tested nationally and in four metropolitan areas: Miami-Dade, New York City, Chicago and San Francisco. Fielding will be completed in the next two weeks; next steps include analysis of the data and the development of an index, including the data points that measure the key elements of public preparedness. The PRI survey tool and index will be completed and released this summer.

BIG CITY EMERGENCY MANAGERS’ LEARNING AND EXCHANGE FORUM: The Council convenes and facilitates a “Learning and Exchange Forum” of the directors of emergency management from Boston, New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, DC, San Francisco and Miami-Dade County, with support from the Sloan Foundation and Sprint Nextel. The purpose of the forum is to provide a venue where the emergency managers can share experiences, best practices and lessons learned related to preventing or mitigating, preparing for and responding to a range of major emergencies. Forum meetings have been held in Washington, D.C. and Chicago, on topics ranging from public education to securing critical infrastructure to planning for avian flu. The next session is planned in New York City in September.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY: HOW READY ARE GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL MANAGERS? Who better to ask than city and county financial managers from South Florida? In February 2006, the Council partnered with the Florida League of Cities and Citigroup to convene over 50 local financial managers to share best practices and strategies for crisis financial planning. No strangers to disaster, the group drew on their extensive experience to develop a list of the key elements of integrated, coordinated financial planning for emergency

preparedness. They also outlined pre-existing relationships and agreements – between other jurisdictions and levels of government, non-profits and the private sector – that would contribute to sound, accountable and transparent financial management during and after a major emergency.

II. Gaps in Preparedness

Five years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the tragedy of the Gulf hurricanes starkly illustrated the persistent gaps in collaborative leadership and the capacity to mobilize effective, coordinated and timely action before, during and after a large scale disaster, like Katrina. One key reason for the government's failure was that many necessary working relationships between and among the various government actors and with the private sector were not established prior to the storm.

Government agencies at every level are working hard to improve their capacity to prevent, respond to and recover from major emergencies, but they cannot be successful without adequate collaboration, coordination and measures of performance. Government entities share resources after, but seldom before, disasters to lay the ground work for more effective and efficient preparation, response and recovery. Elected and appointed officials are committed to preparedness, but few regularly participate in disaster scenarios or practice drills in their communities or regions. When a major emergency occurs, the quality and speed of decisions are critical, and the coordinated mobilization of resources is essential.

Business leaders, especially in certain sectors (Banking, Finance, Information Technology and Telecommunications) have focused on emergency preparedness and business continuity in a strategic way, but most have not focused on integrating their employees' family emergency plans with their workplace plans. We know that critical personnel are not likely to follow business emergency protocols if they are unsure about the safety of their families. And, small businesses, which employ most Americans, often do not have emergency or business continuity plans at all.

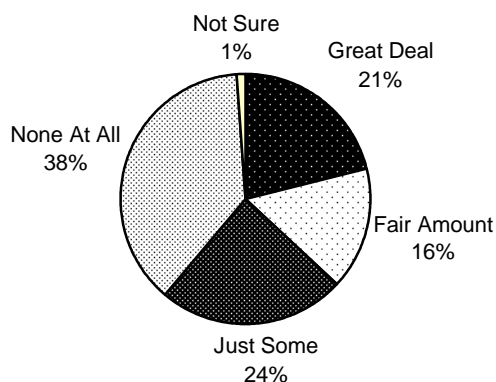
Civic and nonprofit leaders are working to organize programs and volunteers, but they are not well connected to the government and business plans and protocols in case of an emergency.

And, ironically, despite the carnage and destruction that Americans witnessed in the Gulf Coast last year, the American People are still not motivated to take steps to prepare themselves and their families for a major disaster. According to polls¹ conducted for the Council and the

¹ Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies conducted this study on behalf of the Council for Excellence in Government. The study comprises two samples: the first among 1,008 randomly selected adults in the United States, conducted from August 28 to 31, 2005, the days immediately before and after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast but before the full devastation in New Orleans was widely known; the second among 1,000 randomly selected adults in the United States, conducted from October 26 to 30, 2005. Both surveys were conducted by telephone using the random-digit-dial (RDD) sampling technique, stratified by geographic area to ensure a nationally representative sample. The data were weighted in line with the demographic makeup of the U.S. population. The margin of error (MOE) for results among all adults is ± 3.2 percentage points. The report can be found at: <http://www.excelgov.org>.

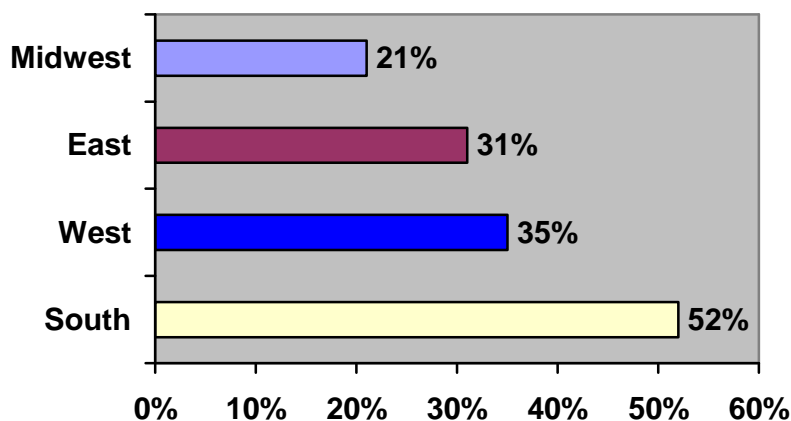
American Red Cross before and after Hurricane Katrina, most people were no more prepared after the Gulf hurricanes than before they watched this terrible disaster unfold. A plurality (38%) of Americans said that Katrina and Rita gave them absolutely no motivation to prepare and only 12% said they had done a great deal to prepare.

How much motivation, if any, did Hurricanes Katrina and Rita provide for you to prepare for an emergency?

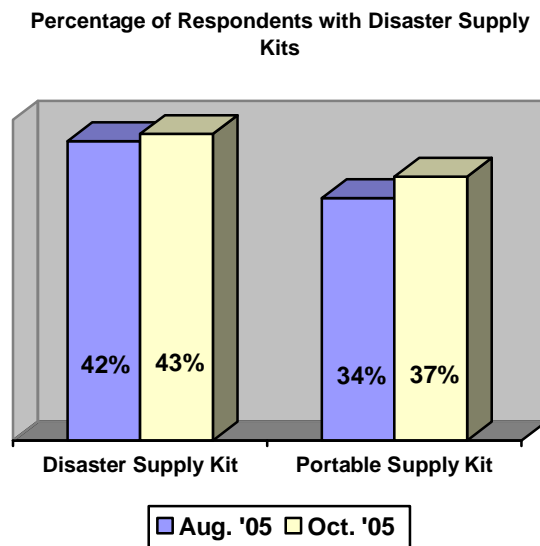


However, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita provided more motivation to some parts of the country than to others. Fully half (52%) of people in the South say that the hurricanes gave them a great deal or a fair amount of motivation to prepare for a disaster near their home. However, just 35% of people in the West, 31% of people in the East, and 21% of people in the Midwest felt the same motivation following the hurricanes.

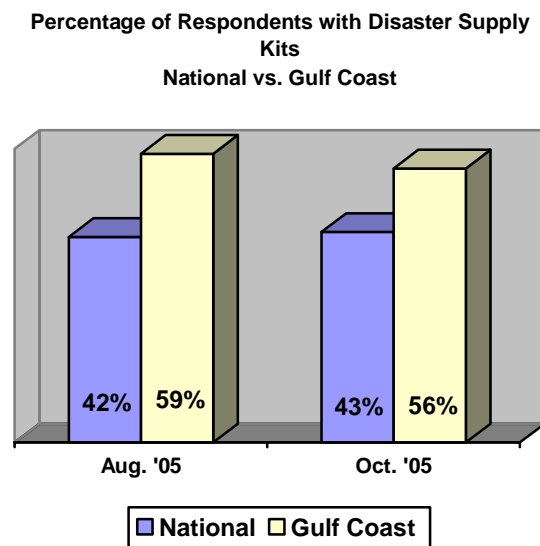
Regional Breakdown of Respondent's Motivation to Prepare



Only 43% of the public has assembled a Disaster Supplies Kit with emergency supplies such as water, food, and medicine that is kept apart from everyday use. Just 37% of adults have prepared a small kit with emergency supplies for storage in their car or at work in case they need to be on-the-go quickly. In both cases, the numbers basically did not change after Katrina.



People who live in the areas affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita are significantly more likely than average to have a Disaster Supplies Kit: in August, 59% of people living in the Gulf Coast region and parts of Texas reported having prepared a kit (compared with 42% of adults nationwide), today the proportion is virtually unchanged, with 56% of the affected area's residents saying they have prepared a kit.

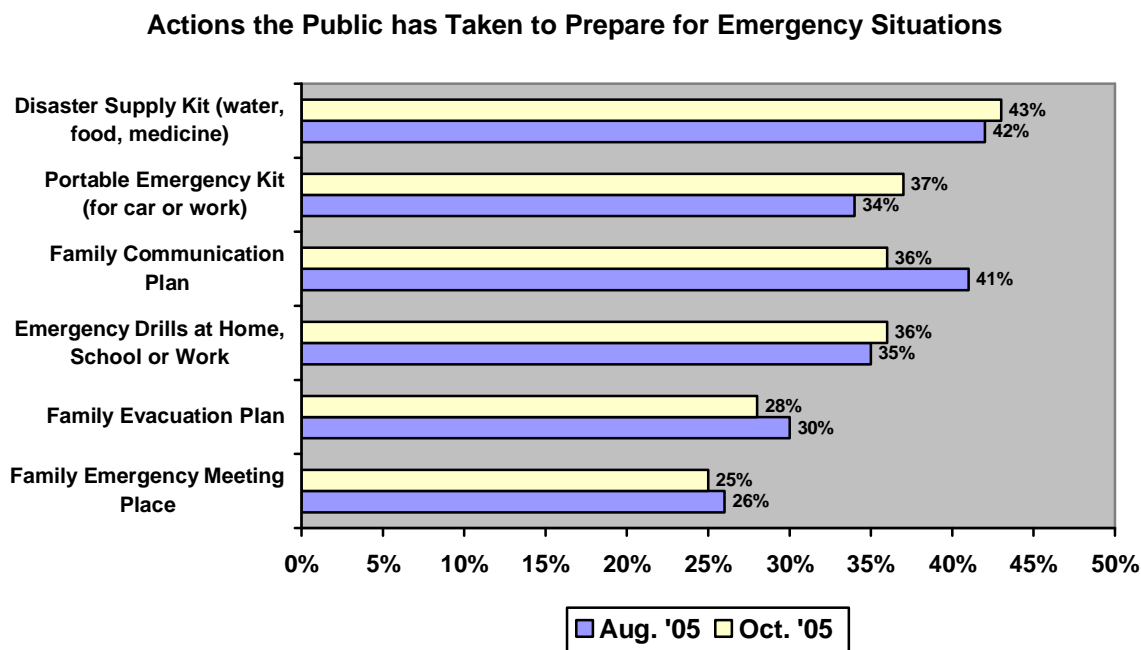


Despite having heard the desperate pleas of separated family members in the days after Hurricane Katrina, most Americans still have no plan on how to communicate with their family

members during or after a disaster. Just 36% of adults report that they have prepared a communication plan to contact family members or loved ones in an emergency if they get separated. Even fewer (25%) have established a specific meeting place in the event that they or their family members are evacuated or cannot return home.

Not surprisingly, individuals who have children under age 18 in their home are more likely to have developed or to be considering developing a family communication plan (63%) than are those who do not have children living at home (56%).

The following chart provides more detail on what the public has done to prepare.



That data begs the question: Why?

It is ironic, but important to understand that the optimism, ingenuity and resilience of the American public, are both assets and barriers to reaching the level of public preparedness we need to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover quickly from a major disaster — natural or manmade — from a hurricane to a terrorist attack or pandemic flu. Our research provides some insights, but not the final answers.

§ It won't happen to me. More than half of Americans say that one reason they have not done more to prepare is because they do not think another disaster is likely to happen to them. We seem to believe that the tragedies of the gulf hurricanes and September 11th were terrible events with horrific consequences--but the devastation was someplace else . . . not in my community or my home or business.

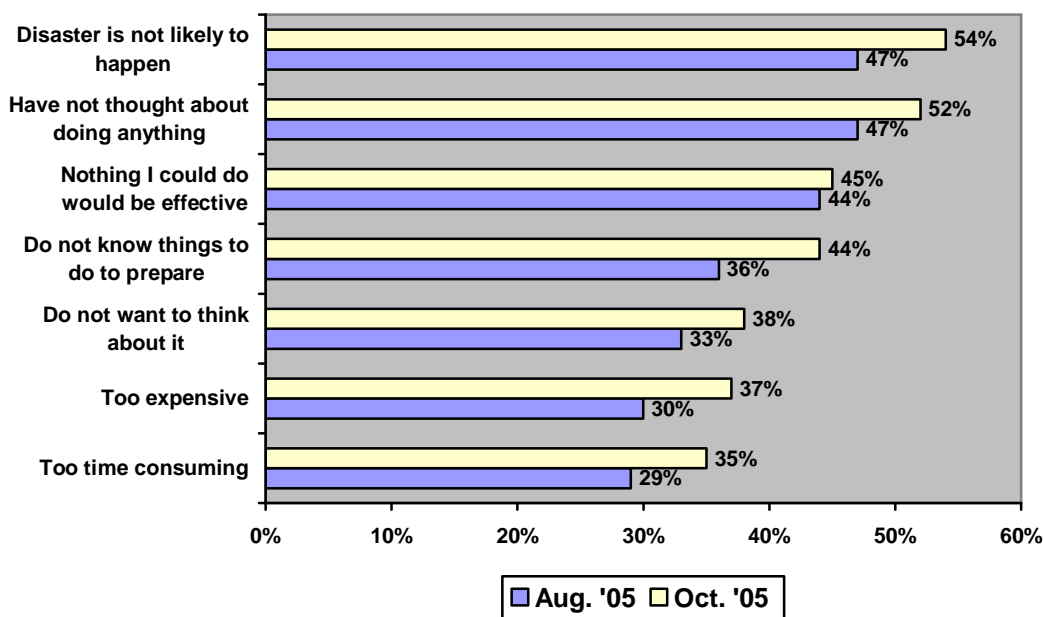
§ *I just haven't thought about it or I don't want to think about it.* Half of Americans explain that they haven't thought to take the initiative and about a third say that they don't want to think about it.

§ *Nothing I could do would be effective.* Forty-five percent do not believe their own actions to prepare would make a difference.

§ *I don't know what to do.* Despite the preparedness campaigns at national and local levels, the post Katrina survey showed that 44% of the public reported that they do not know what to do, an increase of nine percentage points.

§ At the bottom of the list of reasons the public gives for not preparing, is that it would be too expensive or take too much time.

Reasons for Not Preparing for Emergencies



III. MOVING FORWARD

The Select Committee's report, the Senate and White House reports analyze the shortcomings of the Katrina response, identify gaps and make specific recommendations. I would like to highlight some of these and add a few suggestions to improve public preparedness and the performance of government in the future.

CREATE A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS. Our pre- and post-Katrina surveys show that we still need to find the right messages, messengers and modes of distribution to motivate the American people to take basic steps to prepare themselves and their families for a major disaster.

Simplify and Synchronize Preparedness Messages. Complicating the public's motivation and ability to prepare is the fact that many public and private organizations

have developed their own preparedness campaigns, with their own messages, their own brands and their own sets of instructions. These sometimes conflicting and sometimes overlapping messages confuse the public and exacerbate the challenge of motivating individuals and families to prepare. For example, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has two campaigns -- Ready.gov (www.ready.gov), and within DHS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has the Are You Ready Campaign www.fema.gov/areyouready and www.fema.gov/kids. Additionally, most states and major cities have their own preparedness campaigns – ReadyNY www.nyc.gov (New York City), www.72hours.org (San Francisco), Get Ready www.oes.ca.gov (State of California), and Alert Chicago, www.alertchicago.com. The American Red Cross has its own preparedness campaign, “Together We Prepare,” (www.redcross.org). There is also a new web site with instructions to prepare for avian flu (www.pandemicflu.gov), which is not connected to Ready.gov.

The main messages need to be simplified to a “to do” checklist that could be posted on a bulletin board or refrigerator, with instructions about how to get more information, if needed. Key policy makers and stakeholders must make a concerted effort to align these messages to the greatest extent possible through coordination and co-branding. They should work on creating a comprehensive, consistent national campaign with local customization. This effort will require a commitment from these organizations to share their research and to work collaboratively to hone these public campaigns in order to move the needle on public preparedness.

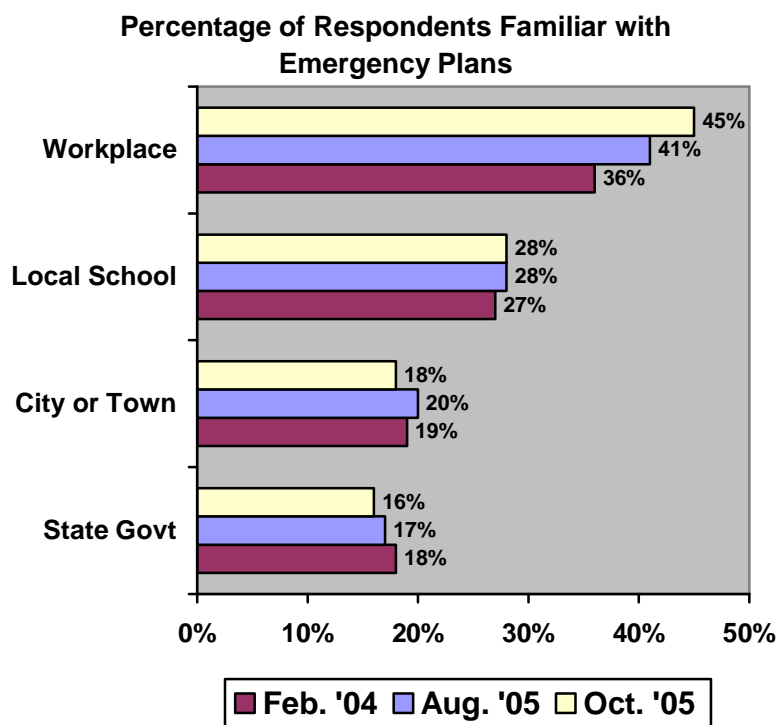
To promote consistency in the branding of preparedness campaigns, the Department of Homeland Security is exploring the development of a “Ready Seal of Approval” that could be used by states and localities that have or are launching their own readiness campaigns. Implementing such an initiative would lead to greater coordination between the federal and local campaigns and would promote the use of similar messaging in the campaign. The “Ready.gov” web site already links to the states’ preparedness web sites, but the top 50-100 metropolitan areas should be included as well.

Tap Into Effective Ambassadors. Another key element to maximize the effectiveness of preparedness campaigns is to find the most effective messengers.

§ Children as motivators. Children serve as effective ambassadors for safety and security messages as evidenced by the success of fire safety, anti-smoking and seat belt safety campaigns. Targeting children through school programs can be an effective and productive way to motivate their parents to take action. For example, during National Fire Prevention Week in October, many schools integrate lessons on fire safety including homework assignments for children and parents to review and practice their family plan. This approach could also be effective for emergency preparedness.

§ Incorporate home preparation in workplace emergency planning and drills. The Council’s survey indicates that 45% of respondents were familiar with their workplace’s emergency preparedness plan compared to just 28% who were familiar

with their local schools plan, 18% who were familiar with their local government's plan and 16% who were familiar with their state's plan. Employers can be a key partner in helping to improving individual and family preparedness, and integrating family plans with business plans.



Source: Polls by Peter Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies

§ Faith-based organizations. Religious leaders are trusted spokespeople in many communities, who could be effective ambassadors for emergency preparedness.

Use multiple media to communicate consistent messages. Certainly the internet is a vital tool in disseminating information on preparedness, but it does not reach people who do not have access to computers and the internet, who may have a language barrier, or who simply do not go to the emergency websites. A preparedness campaign has to incorporate the basic tenants of marketing and advertising. Consistent messages delivered in person, on radio, T.V., in print and on the internet in a sustained way can make a difference. A concerted effort with adequate resources for marketing research, evaluation and effective delivery is imperative to reach the “tipping point” of preparedness. We all know “stop, drop and roll,” “buckle up for safety,” “click it or ticket” and “friends don’t let friends drive drunk.” We have seen successful campaigns for recycling, anti-smoking, seat belts and fire safety. We need to collaborate and invest at a level necessary to mount a successful campaign for emergency preparedness, with clear, consistent messages, communicated repeatedly by trusted messengers through multiple media.

Creative best practices can be shared and replicated. For example, the City of Los Angeles distributed more than 200,000 fans with preparedness information to the faith community. Additionally, they have preparedness information on DVDs that are sent home with

all public school children. With regard to language barriers, New York City publishes their emergency preparedness materials in eight different languages.

FOCUS ON METRICS. Quite simply, what gets measured gets done.

The Public Readiness Index is an example of an easy to use tool to measure and compare the preparedness of individuals and families for a major emergency. It should be institutionalized and used regularly by metropolitan areas, states, regions and the nation, as a barometer of the effectiveness of efforts to educate, motivate and prepare the public.

Metrics to hold government and business accountable. A Public Readiness Index is just one set of metrics needed for America's preparedness toolkit. The capacity and performance of government, employers, schools and other organizations should also be measured. We would like to see readiness indices for local and state government, for regions, for the federal government, for businesses and for schools. The idea of an index is to boil a number of measures down to a small set of critical indices that can be used by stakeholders, including the public, to ensure accountability for emergency preparedness.

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO COORDINATION AMONG STATE, LOCAL AND FEDERAL STAKEHOLDERS.

The threat, consequences and resources needed to address major emergencies go beyond local and state boundaries and federal assistance. For that reason, greater emphasis needs to be placed on coordinating the various government and non-government actors across city, county and state lines to plan, train and exercise catastrophic events. The first time decision makers or responders meet each other should not be when an event happens. They should regularly participate in joint training and exercises on a regular basis; collaborate on plans to achieve interoperable voice, video and data communications; establish joint emergency operations; work together to develop expedited and accountable crisis procurement and financial management processes, and collaborate on public readiness education campaigns.

Key elected and appointed leaders should participate in planning, training and exercises. When a major emergency occurs, the quality and speed of decisions are critical, and the coordinated mobilization of resources is essential. The first time a governor or a mayor participates in real time disaster decision making and leadership cannot be when disaster strikes.

Governors, mayors, emergency managers, public safety officials, health leaders, school leaders, CEO's of large and small business, leaders of civic and voluntary organizations in regions across the country should regularly participate in joint training and exercises that measure their capability to respond to the various disaster scenarios set out in the Interim National Preparedness Goal. A critical outcome of these joint exercises should be public commitments by regional leaders to work together on:

- § Coordinated emergency plans and metrics for the region;
- § Joint training and exercises on a regular basis;
- § Plans to achieve interoperable voice, video and data communications;
- § Expedited and accountable crisis procurement processes;

- § Coordinated emergency financial plans;
- § Joint emergency operations;
- § Joint development and testing of information and messages that will motivate, educate and engage the public; and
- § Institutionalization through schools and workplaces of emergency plans and practice drills that are understood and owned by the people involved.

First responders need to know in advance what federal assistance can be provided, by when, after an emergency. In talking to the Big City Emergency Managers, they want to know what the Federal government is willing to stage and what resources they can tap within certain timeframes, in the context of the National Response Plan and National Incident Management Strategy.

Look Beyond the “last battle.” For example, evacuation was huge issue in Katrina, so state and local governments have been required to reexamine their emergency preparedness plans, with a particular emphasis on assuring that all jurisdictions could evacuate their entire communities. The standard of full evacuation of cities such as New York or Los Angeles is regarded by first responders as unrealistic and somewhat irrelevant in the context of planning for an earthquake, terrorist attack or avian flu. Planning requirements should also be coordinated so they can be integrated into an all hazards preparedness strategy.

IV. CONCLUSION

In May 2004, the Council released “*We the People: Homeland Security from the Citizens’ Perspective*,” a report including over 50 recommendations to improve the country’s ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from catastrophic events. Those recommendations focused on collaborative leadership, strategic information sharing, public preparedness and performance metrics. Progress has been made, but clearly not enough, especially in areas such as coordination and collaboration among the various levels of government, interoperability of data and voice communications and public preparedness.

The security of our communities, the vitality of economy and the strength of our democracy depends on a sustained, strategic collective effort to get this right. Thank you again for your leadership to help achieve the level of preparedness we need.